

# Wisconsin's General Transportation Aids Program

An informational brochure  
presented by the  
Local Roads & Streets Council



# LRSC

**Local Roads & Streets Council**

Advisory to the Wisconsin Secretary of Transportation



## What is the purpose of the General Transportation Aids (GTA) program?

The purpose of the General Transportation Aids program is to provide an annual distribution of legislatively-determined state Transportation Fund revenues which, in combination with local funds, will supply a stable financing base for a portion of local highway transportation costs, including the maintenance, operation and construction of safe local roads, streets and highways.

## Why is the GTA program important?

General Transportation Aids recognize the vital role local roads play in Wisconsin's overall state transportation network. Each jurisdiction maintains a local road, street or highway system as part of the statewide highway transportation system. Wisconsin is home to about 112,000 miles of roadways. Of the total, approximately 90% of these miles are under local jurisdiction.

Local units of government have limited ability to raise revenue necessary to fully support the construction, maintenance, and operational activities required to provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Since users of all highways in the state pay the same state motor fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees into the state transportation fund, it is reasonable that a portion of those monies be used to help cover the operational costs associated with roads under local jurisdiction.

## Where do the GTA program funds come from?

GTA program funds come from State Transportation Fund revenues, which are primarily collected from state motor fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees.

The Legislature establishes an annual amount of GTA funding for counties, and an annual amount of GTA funding for municipalities.

## How are GTA payments determined?

Municipalities receive funding based either upon a share of eligible transportation related expenditures or on a per-mile payment, whichever is greater. Counties receive GTA based upon a share of eligible highway-related expenditures and are not eligible for a per-mile payment.

### Share-of-costs payment

The share-of-costs payment that a local unit of government receives is determined by the total amount of funding in the GTA program, the average cost of eligible activities reported by the unit of government for the previous six-year period, and the statewide average cost of eligible activities reported by other communities sharing in the county or municipal appropriation. The calculation of six-year average costs is based solely on local expenditures. Funding obtained through federal and state sources is not eligible to be included in the GTA calculation.

*“General Transportation Aids is the second largest WisDOT program, with an annual appropriation in CY 2005 of \$373.3 million.”*



## Rate-per-mile payment

The rate-per-mile payment a municipality receives is based upon its miles of roadway and the per-mile rate established by the Legislature. The payment can be reduced based on the average cost of eligible activities reported by the municipality for the previous three-year period. No municipality may receive a GTA payment that exceeds 85% of their three-year average costs.

## How are GTA funds invested?

Local governments invest GTA funds on eligible transportation-related projects and services such as:

- » Roadway maintenance
- » Roadway construction
- » Snowplowing and ice control
- » Bridge construction and maintenance
- » Traffic signals, signing and markings
- » Safety improvements
- » Street lighting
- » Traffic assistance, enforcement and control

All of these investments contribute to the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

*Most cities and villages (91%) receive GTA in CY 2005 based on the "share-of-costs" payment method while 96% of towns obtain GTA through the "rate-per-mile" method.*

## What factors impact the amount of funding for the GTA program?

- » The amount of travel on local roads
- » Age and condition of local roads and bridges
- » Total miles of roadway under local jurisdiction
- » Safety
- » Inflation (construction costs)
- » Federal and state mandates related to local roads
- » Changing expectations of the traveling public
- » Growing needs of business and industry
- » Legislative decisions

## Have increases in GTA been matched by increased local investment in the maintenance and construction of transportation infrastructure?

Yes. A way to illustrate this is to compare the growth in GTA with the growth in local expenditures for maintenance and construction of local transportation infrastructure. The growth can be portrayed in both percentage increases and actual dollar growth.

### Percentage growth

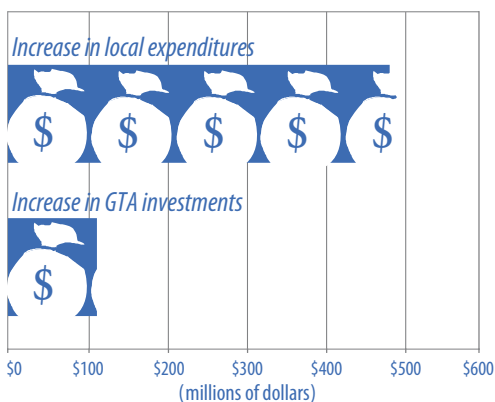
The GTA appropriation grew from \$268.6 million in 1995 to \$373.3 million in 2004, an increase of 39%. Local transportation investments have increased during this same period from \$1.133 billion to \$1.613 billion, a growth rate of 42%. The GTA appropriation and total local transportation expenditures increased at a similar rate during the past 10 years.

## Dollar growth

The 10-year trend shows that investments in General Transportation Aids have increased by \$105 million, while expenditures in local maintenance and construction improvements have increased by \$480 million—or—for every dollar increase in GTA over the last 10 years, local units of government have committed over four additional dollars in transportation investments.

These figures indicate that GTA is not just an important source of funding, but is also a catalyst to added transportation investments.

Relative Dollar Growth in General Transportation Aids and Local Transportation Investments: 1995–2004



## Are local governments held accountable?

Yes. All local governments, by statute, must submit a financial report on an annual basis detailing all expenditures and revenues. All eligible expenditures are defined by state statute and audited by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Furthermore, counties and municipalities with a population of 25,000 or more must also conduct an annual audit of their financial report and forward the audit findings to the state each year.

## For additional program information, please contact:

Scott Bush  
GTA Program Manager  
Wisconsin Department  
of Transportation  
(608) 266-0254  
*scott.bush@dot.state.wi.us*

Or visit the GTA home page at:  
*[http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/  
highways/gta.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/gta.htm)*

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Local Roads & Streets Council  
P. O. Box 7913  
Madison, WI 53707-7913

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